



Sault Area
Chamber of Commerce

April 27, 2009

Representative Gary McDowell
State House
P.O. Box 30014
Lansing, MI 48909

Re: HR #80

Dear Representative McDowell,

I send this letter as an acknowledgment that the Sault Area Chamber of Commerce is in support of all efforts to help begin construction of a new lock in the Soo Locks complex located in Sault Ste. Marie.

As you know, the Soo Locks is an integral component to commercial and recreational navigation throughout the Great Lakes. The two operational Soo Locks typically handle 80 to 85 million tons of cargo per year. Included in that total are 70 percent of the iron ore moving on the Lakes, 52 percent of the coal and 67 percent of the grain.

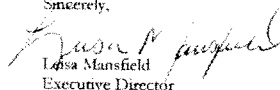
The tonnage handled between Lake Superior and the lower Great Lakes by the Soo Locks was 81,683,184 net tons in 2007. By comparison, between the Atlantic Ocean and Pacific Ocean, the Panama Canal handled 23,219,360 net tons in 2007. It is significant that the tonnage at the Soo Locks is equivalent to 35% of the total tonnage through the Panama Canal.

The problem is that one lock, the Poe, handles nearly 80 percent of all of the traffic. Roughly 70 percent of the U.S. Flag Great Lakes fleet is restricted to the Poe Lock because of the vessel's length and/or beam. If anything happens to the Poe Lock, the North American steel industry will quickly face raw material shortages. The regions power plants that have switched to clean-burning low sulfur coal will be without fuel. Midwest farmers will be cut off from export markets world-wide.

The U.S. Congress first authorized an expansion of the Soo Locks in 1986 and, more recently, in 2007 further authorized full federal support of the project. Despite this activity and millions of dollars spent on planning, design and preparation, funding for the construction of a new lock has yet to properly allocated. A new Poe-sized lock is shovel ready and will generate thousands of jobs and generate immediate stimulus to Michigan's desperately struggling economy.

We applaud your efforts in lobbying the Governor and the State Legislature to actively solicit the Federal appropriations necessary for the construction of a new shipping lock. And also ask that you continue your work in helping Sault Ste. Marie secure the necessary funding to keep this important piece of infrastructure available for Great Lakes Shipping.

Sincerely,


Lisa Mansfield
Executive Director